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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001722

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE WILLIAMSON, NSC  
FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: FRUSTRATED MINNAWI TO PREP FOR "WAR OR PEACE"

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1689

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1649

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: A deeply frustrated and worried Minni Minnawi warned on November 28 that the ruling National Congress Party's (NCP) ongoing game of obfuscation and delay will drive him eventually back to the field with his fighters and "eventually under the flag of self-determination for Darfur." Minnawi will be traveling to Libya on November 30, return briefly to Khartoum and then go visit his adherents in Darfur again for an extended period. He also asked for American help in securing medical treatment in Norway. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Senior Assistant to the President and SLM leader Minni Minnawi told CDA Fernandez on November 28 that he had just spent a highly frustrating 24 hours with the regime's senior leadership without resolving outstanding issues related to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) or the September 19 El Fasher accord between Minnawi and VP Ali Osman Taha. Minnawi had traveled with other senior leaders to Port Sudan for an "on-the road" session of Sudan's cabinet. He had actually sat next to Minister of Finance Awad al-Jaz and had pressed him on clearing up the question of funds promised on September 19 for the TDRA (Transitional Darfur Regional Authority) which Minni heads. Instead of being provided directly to Minnawi, the 30 million dollars had been provided "by mistake" by the authorities to Minnawi's rivals in Darfur, promoting dissension within both his movement and within the very shaky and cash-starved regional authority he leads.

[1](#)3. (C) The savvy Al-Jaz (and in a separate meeting, VP Taha's envoy Ata al-Manaan) had insisted that the disbursement had indeed been a mistake but could not easily be corrected because the money was now gone. Minnawi replied that "you are all joking with me, and mocking me." It is inconceivable that the regime would make such a mistake involving real money, it was intentional, to give the appearance of compliance but actually subverting Minnawi's authority further. He added that President Bashir has refused to meet with him since Minnawi returned from his self-imposed internal exile in the wilds of North Darfur. "Bashir can't even look at me, much less meet. He looks so sad these days."

[1](#)4. (C) Minnawi intends to consult with the Libyans and with the SPLM about possible next steps. He will then return to Khartoum and then visit his men in the field. He also would like to travel to Norway for medical treatment and asked that the US press the Norwegians to be helpful in this regard. In Khartoum, VP Taha has promised to "get back to me", on Minnawi's complaints but after "going round and round" with the NCP for over two months now after the El Fasher agreement, Minnawi doesn't expect much.

[1](#)5. (C) Minnawi mused that the regime's current machinations

shows them in their true light. They will continue to string him along as long as possible, keeping him frustrated and weak, but engaged in fruitless and endless discussions on things they agreed to do long ago, dangling the possibility of a resolution just around the corner. CDA agreed that the NCP's preferred way is always to engage and deceive, to see how much they can get away with. Minnawi said that he needs to be ready for "either war or peace" in the coming months. He feels that Darfuris are going to have to confront the question of their ultimate destiny sooner or later. "How can we come to an agreement with a regime that will immediately work to hollow out what is agreed to?" Issues that the international community are focused on - one region for Darfur, a VP slot for Darfur, compensation, janjaweed disarmament - will be subverted by the NCP even if they eventually agree to do them. "We are going to have to demand the right of self-determination," he added. "Either the nature of the regime in Khartoum will be transformed and its relationship with the region changes, or we will have to obtain the right to vote on independence, just like South Sudan." Minnawi said that this is an issue on everyone's mind in Darfur but no one wants to openly talk about it for fear of upsetting the international community, which is always willing to offer the Khartoum regime, "this band of jokers," one more chance at redemption.

16. (C) Comment: Minnawi's frustration is palpable but problematic. Some of his senior advisors (reftels), especially those based in Khartoum, are less negative than he is and his movement could well split once again, if he takes up armed struggle. He would also lose the very tenuous fig leaf that the moribund DPA has provided to him and his

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fighters in Darfur, despite NCP duplicity, and to the mostly Zaghawa, scattered populations they protect. There is no guarantee that his former rebel colleagues, such as SLM leader Abdul Wahid Nur, would rally around him or that any potential international backers such as Libya or Chad, would do so either. And while returning to the field, raising the banner of Darfuri self-determination would certainly attract a lot of attention, it would also set off alarm bells both within Darfur and in regional capitals. The struggle over the same issue - autonomy or self-determination leading to possible independence - tore South Sudan apart and bled the rebel movement for years, to the benefit of the regime in Khartoum. The fact is that Minnawi is in an impossible and dangerous situation no matter what he does. End comment.

FERNANDEZ